

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 AID-01 SS-07 NSC-06 /024 W
----- 063080

R 010825Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3384
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
JCS WASHDC
CINCPAC CAMP SMITH HONOLULU
CINCPACREPPHIL SUBIC NB
13TH AF CLARK AB

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANILA 18649

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, OREP (BOYER/SCHOLLAERT/HYNDMAN)
SUBJ: HIRC STAFFDEL VISIT TO PHILIPPINES

REF: STATE 268476

1. SUMMARY: HIRC STAFFDEL VISITED MANILA NOVEMBER 22-26 TO GATHER INFORMATION ON CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE US SECURITY ASSISTANCE. STAFFDEL VISITED CLARK AND SUBIC, WERE BRIEFED BY EMBASSY, JUSMAG, AND AID OFFICIALS, AND CALLED ON AFP CHIEF OF STAFF ESPINO. STAFFDEL ALSO HEARD VIEWS OF OPPOSITIONIST SENATOR SALONGA. VISIT WENT SMOOTHLY. STAFFDEL'S PRINCIPAL INTEREST SEEMED TO BE OVERALL PERSPECTIVE OF U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO THE PHILIPPINES. THEY EXPRESSED THE CONCERN OF THEIR COMMITTEE THAT ITS PREROGATIVE OF AUTHORIZING ALL MILITARY ASSISTANCE ON A YEARLY BASIS NOT BE BYPASSED BY THE TERMS OF A NEW BASE AGREEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. ROBERT BOYER AND JAMES SCHOLLAERT, STAFF CONSULTANTS OF THE HOUSE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE, AND VANCE HYNDMAN, RESEARCH ASSISTANT OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL/MILITARY AFFAIRS, VISITED
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MANILA NOVEMBER 22-26. THEIR STATED INTEREST WAS IN

GATHERING INFORMATION ON CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND IN LOOKING INTO THE BASE NEGOTIATIONS AS THEY MIGHT AFFECT SECURITY ASSISTANCE. DELEGATION CALLED ON THE AMBASSADOR AND WAS BRIEFED BY EMBASSY OFFICIALS ON THE OVERALL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE PHILIPPINES. BRIEFINGS INCLUDED, AT STAFFDEL'S REQUEST, OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE STABILITY OF THE MARCOS REGIME, THREATS TO PHILIPPINE SECURITY (INCLUDING THE MUSLIM INSURGENCY), THE ABILITY OF THE GOP TO ABSORB MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION, STAFFDEL ALSO WAS BRIEFED BY AID OFFICIALS ON THE GOP'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS (AID GAVE A GUARDEDLY OPTIMISTIC ASSESSMENT). IN ADDITION, THEY HEARD THE VIEWS OF LEADING OPPOSITIONIST, SENATOR JOVITO SALONGA, AT A DINNER GIVEN BY EMBASSY POLITICAL COUNSELOR.

3. VISIT TO THE BASES. STAFFDEL SPENT ONE DAY AT SUBIC AND CLARK. FOLLOWING HELICOPTER TOUR OF SUBIC, THEY WERE BRIEFED BY ADMIRAL KILCLINE ON MAJOR BASE ACTIVITIES. AT CLARK THEY WERE GIVEN TOUR OF FACILITIES AND THEN BRIEFED BY GENERAL POSTON AND HIS STAFF. STAFFDEL WAS INTERESTED IN THE VIEWS OF SUBIC AND CLARK ON THE BASE NEGOTIATIONS AND WERE TOLD THAT THE PRINCIPAL CONCERN OF THE U.S. MILITARY IS IN MAINTAINING OPERATIONAL CONTROL OVER U.S. FORCES. THERE WAS SOME DISCUSSION OF PROBLEMS OF MAINTAINING BASES IN THE PHILIPPINES -- INTRUDERS, BOMBING RANGE INCIDENTS, SQUATTER PROBLEM, ETC. DISCUSSIONS WERE RELAXED AT BOTH CLARK AND SUBIC AND STAFFDEL SEEMED GENUINELY INTERESTED IN GETTING A BALANCED BACKGROUND. THEY DID NOT DIRECTLY QUESTION THE RATIONALE OF SUBIC AND CLARK, BUT SEEMED MORE INTERESTED IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BASE NEGOTIATIONS AND U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE.

4. MILITARY ASSISTANCE. AT JUSMAG, STANDARD BRIEFING WAS FOLLOWED BY DISCUSSIONS WITH GENERAL MAPP AND DIVISION CHIEFS. DELEGATION ASKED WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF MAAG WERE ELIMINATED AND THE GOP INSTEAD PURCHASED ALL ITS MILITARY HARDWARE DIRECTLY. THEY WERE ADVISED

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THAT THIS MIGHT EVENTUALLY BE POSSIBLE, BUT THAT AT PRESENT THE AFP RELIES HEAVILY ON MAAG FOR ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE IN PROCURING MATERIEL. STAFFDEL INQUIRED ABOUT MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR THE PHILIPPINE CONSTABULARY (PC). THEY WERE INFORMED THAT MAP SUPPORT IS PROVIDED TO THE ELEVEN PC COMBAT BATTALIONS, BUT NO ASSISTANCE IS PROVIDED TO THE NATIONAL POLICE. JUSMAG PROVIDED DATA ON TYPES AND LEVELS OF CURRENT ASSISTANCE AND TIME

SPENT BY ITS PERSONNEL ON VARIOUS ACTIVITIES. STAFFDEL ALSO ASKED IF U.S.-PROVIDED EQUIPMENT WAS BEING USED IN MINDANAO. JUSMAG OFFICIALS EXPLAINED THAT MUCH OF THE EQUIPMENT WINDS UP IN MINDANAO, BUT THAT THE U.S. MISSION IS CAREFUL TO AVOID ANY INVOLVEMENT IN THE WAR IN THE SOUTH.

5. CALL ON ESPINO. STAFFDEL CALLED ON GENERAL ROMEO ESPINO, CHIEF OF STAFF OF PHILIPPINE ARMED FORCES (AFP) NOVEMBER 25. DURING DISCUSSION WHICH LASTED NEARLY ONE HOUR, ESPINO RPLIED TO QUESTIONS ON U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND THE BASE NEGOTIATIONS. ESPINO OPENED CONVERSATION BY NOTING THAT THE GOP CONTINUES TO BELIEVE IN IMPORTANCE OF U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE PHILIPPINES. AT SAME TIME, THE GOP WANTS TO BE ABLE TO STAND ON ITS OWN FEET MILITARILY. HE SAID THE FILIPINO IS A NATURAL SOLDIER, BUT NEEDS ADQUATE MATERIEL SUPPORT. THE AFP SELF-RELIANCE PROGRAM SO FAR "HAS NOT MADE APPRECIABLE PROGRESS." WHILE THE MUSLIM INSURGENCY IN MINDANAO IS UNDER CONTROL, THE AFP CONTINUES TO SUFFER SIGNIFICANT CASUALTIES. FOR

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INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 AID-01 SS-07 NSC-06 /024 W

----- 063214

R 010825Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3385

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EXAMPLE, AFP LOSSES HAVE BEEN HEAVY OVER PAST TWO WEEKS IN JOLO. EVEN THOUGH FOREIGN ARMS SHIPMENTS TO MUSLIM REBELS HAVE DECLINED MARKEDLY, THE INSURGENCY COULD DRAG ON FOR SOME TIME. IN ANY EVENT, A STRONG MILITARY PRESENCE IN MINDANAO WILL BE NEEDED IN THE

FORESEEABLE FUTURE BECAUSE "LIKE A GOOD DOCTOR, YOU HAVE TO CONTINUE MEDICATION EVEN AFTER THE PATIENT IS FEELING BETTER." ESPINO CHARACTERIZED PRESENT U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE AS "NIGGARDLY." HE SAID THE GOP REALIZES FULL WELL THE U.S. CONGRESS IS INCREASINGLY RELUCTANT TO FUND GRANT MILITARY AID AND THIS IS WHY THE GOP ATTACHES SUCH IMPORTANCE TO NEGOTIATING A LARGE ONE-PACKAGE DEAL AT THIS TIME.

6. ESPINO WAS ASKED HOW THE AFP WOULD VIEW THE ELIMINATION OF THE MAAG PROGRAM. HE REPLIED, "AS FAR AS WE ARE CONCERNED, YOU CAN SCRAP MAAG." HE SAID HE HAD EXCELLENT RELATIONS WITH MAAG AND APPRECIATED THE ASSISTANCE IT HAS GIVEN THE AFP IN THE PAST, BUT BELIEVES IT HAS NOW OUTLIVED ITS USEFULNESS. THE AFP, HE SAID, WOULD NOW PREFER TO PROCURE ITS MILITARY HARDWARE DIRECTLY. HE SUGGESTED THAT THIS COULD PROBABLY BE HANDLED THROUGH A PROCUREMENT OFFICE CONNECTED TO THE PHILIPPINE EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON. (STAFFDEL MENTIONED ESPINO'S COMMENTS ABOUT MAAG IN PRE-DEPARTURE CALL
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ON AMBASSADOR. AMBASSADOR EXPLAINED THAT THIS WAS STANDARD LINE OF THE FILIPINOS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS.) BOYER ASKED IF THE AFP WAS SATISFIED WITH THE MATERIEL IT HAS PURCHASED FROM THIRD COUNTRIES AND WAS TOLD BY ESPINO THAT SO FAR THERE HAVE BEEN NO PROBLEMS. ESPINO CLAIMED IN THIS REGARD THAT THE GOP OFTEN NEEDS MATERIEL MORE QUICKLY THAN IT CAN BE OBTAINED FROM THE U.S. HE RECITED AN OLD TAGALOG SAYING WHICH GOES: "WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH THE HAY IF THE HORSE IS DEAD?"

7. SCHOLLAERT EXPRESSED TO ESPINO THE CONCERN OF HIS CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE THAT ITS PREROGATIVE OF AUTHORIZING ALL MILITARY ASSISTANCE ON A YEARLY BASIS NOT BE BYPASSED BY THE TERMS OF THE NEW BASE AGREEMENT. SCHOLLAERT THEN ASKED HOW THE GOP WOULD VIEW CONTINUED YEARLY CONGRESSIONAL AUTHORIZATION OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE. ESPINO REPLIED THAT THIS WAS A POLITICAL QUESTION WHICH HE PREFERRED NOT TO GET INTO.

8. COMMENT: DELEGATION SEEMED SATISFIED WITH VISIT. THOUGH THEY EXPRESSED INTEREST IN A NUMBER OF OTHER QUESTIONS -- HUMAN RIGHTS, BASE NEGOTIATIONS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ETC. -- THEIR PRIMARY INTEREST WAS IN THE LEVEL OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR THE PHILIPPINES. EARLY ON THEY EXPRESSED SOME SCEPTICISM ABOUT THE GOP'S NEED FOR AND ABILITY TO ABSORB ANY SUBSTANTIALLY LARGER ASSISTANCE PACKAGE. THE VISIT DID NOT SEEM TO DISABUSE THEM OF THIS VIEW, BUT IT DID PROVIDE THEM

WITH A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF THE COMPLEXITIES OF
THE US-PHILIPPINES RELATIONSHIP.

9. ESPINO'S COMMENTS ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE REPRESENT
SOMETHING OF A DEPARTURE FROM THE PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED
VIEWS OF THE AFP. AT THE STAFF LEVEL, THE AFP STILL
RELIES HEAVILY ON MAAG FOR ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE ON
MATERIEL PROCUREMENT. MOREOVER, THERE HAVE BEEN COMPLAINTS FROM
THE SERVICES, PARTICULARLY THE ARMY, ABOUT PROBLEMS
WITH THIRD COUNTRY PURCHASES, E.G., THE PORTUGUESE
ARMORED CAR AND THE BRITISH SCORPION TANK. REGARDING
ESPINO'S IMPLICATION THAT THE AFP SOMETIMES CANNOT GET
U.S. EQUIPMENT AS QUICKLY AS IT WOULD LIKE, IT SHOULD BE
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NOTED THAT THE AFP IS NOTORIOUS FOR NOT SIGNING LOA'S
IN A TIMELY MANNER. OF APPROXIMATELY 50 FMS OFFERS
MADE DURING 1976, ONLY ABOUT 40 PERCENT WERE ACTED
UPON BY THE AFP PRIOR TO THE INITIAL EXPIRATION DATE.
IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT ESPINO WAS PLAYING HIS ROLE AS A
MEMBER OF THE PHILIPPINE BASE NEGOTIATIONS TEAM TO THE
HILT, RATHER THAN EXPRESSING THE GENUINE SENTIMENTS OF
THE AFP.
SULLIVAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY ASSISTANCE, SECURITY, ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, REPORTS, VISITS, MILITARY BASES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: izenbei0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MANILA18649
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760444-1038
From: MANILA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761283/aaaacugo.tel
Line Count: 251
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION H
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 268476
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: izenbei0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 JUN 2004 by buchant0>; APPROVED <30 SEP 2004 by izenbei0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HIRC STAFFDEL VISIT TO PHILIPPINES
TAGS: MASS, OREP, (BOYER, ROBERT), (SCHOLLAERT, JAMES), (HYNDMAN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006